



## MARRIAGE-A FAILURE?

BIG NICHOL HELM sat coddling away at the sole of a shoe. The new leather looked pink under his dirty hands. It was very hot in his stuffy shop, and he had pinned a newspaper before the window for shade; not that he minded the sun himself, though the water splashed down in great salt drops from his forehead, but to shade the woman and child who sat near him. She had opened her calico dress about her sallow, stringy throat, and her skin glistened with the heat. In her lap lay the baby, very thin and limp. A slit of white under the drooping lids, and its eyes were stained and sunken. From time to time it moved restlessly; then the mother would start from her drowsing and brush the flies away.

"O, papa," she said at last, "the baby's awful sick, an' it's gettin' hotter an' hotter every minute."

"Never mind, wife," replied big Nicholas, bravely. "He ain't half so sick as he looks; it's just because you're tired out a watchin' him that you think so. Why, he laughed just as natural then when I held out my awl at him!"

The shadow of the newspaper slid slowly across the room. Out on the street the hot air waved like colorless flames. There were trees before Nicholas Helm's house, but the caterpillars had tied up the shade in snarls of web and gnawed leaf. Presently the woman spoke again.

"We've had ten, an' every one was prettier and knowin'ger than the last. This one was awful forward; only a week back he drew himself up in a chair an' stood steady for the longest, an' he knowed you, papa, just as well!"

Nichol leaned toward the sick child. "He's fallen off terrible rapid. He used to be the fattest of all." He took one of his tiny yellow hands in his own hairy fist. "Look at yer daddy, little feller," he chuckled; but the child did not notice him.

The sun had set, and the west glowed red behind the black roofs. Nicholas Helm sat on the long bridge that swung its steel cables over the river. Below him the boats steamed up and down, their lights twinkling on the surface of the water. But big Nicholas did not notice them because of the child lying in his arms. A cool breeze fluttered up. The little one opened its eyes and smiled at its father. "Daddy," it cooed, then it nestled its head under the cobbler's arm and slept.

Nichol was very tired. His eyes stung with sleep, and his arm grew numb. Yet he sat there that the sick child might catch some stray breeze denied to the swooning child.

"Poor little kid," he whispered. "He'd have died in that hole a bed-room to-night."

The sky above the city grew dark, and across it opened a vague fan of reflected light. The river, too, turned black and oily, and the lights no longer quivered in it, but lay motionless along the banks, a straight fringe, glossy as threads of colored silk. Still the man sat there with the baby breathing peacefully in his arms.

After his work was done big Nicholas drew a chair out of doors and sat down to read his paper. At this time of day the street was a common living room. Hundreds of children swarmed and sprawled on the hot pavement, while the woman sat on the steps, fanning herself with their aprons and gossiping languidly. Now and then a puff of coolness drifted up from the river with an audible murmur of thankfulness in its wake.

Mrs. Helm came out of the house and stood beside her husband.

"Is your hand much sore to-night?" she inquired anxiously, as she caught a frown of pain on the man's face.

A day or so before Nicholas had driven an awl through the thumb of his right hand, and now it was tied up in a wad of rag, rather dirty and blood-stained. "It hurts worse to-night than it ever done. It jumps like a devil was pounding away under it," Nicholas Helm answered, gloomily; for his thumb was necessary to his trade and his trade was necessary to his own and ten other lives.

"To-morrow you mus' go to the doctor, papa."

"Go to the doctor?" snarled Nicholas, savagely. "When I ain't even put by a cent for coal, an' winter comin' nearer every day."

"It ain't here yet," laughed the woman, looking up to where the moon hung in the hot twilight, while as a bubble of milk, "an' you mus' go the first thing to-morrow."

"I'll see myself dead first!" growled the man; but he went—and she went with him.

The doctor looked at the poor hand, all puffed and crimson.

"The thumb will have to come off. It's just like you people to wait until it's too late, then come here and expect me to cure you! You will be lucky if you don't lose your arm."

Nichol Helm staggered back with a gasp. The sorrows of the poor come baldly, with nothing to soften their announcement; for between them and the facts of life there is no buffer of gold and silver to turn the cruellest truth to mercy.

In a moment his wife was at his side. "He shan't do it! I can cure it—don't let him touch you!"

"Send the woman out," said the doctor.

The cobbler sank into a chair, his big body limp as a baby's.

"But, doctor—my trade—I'll starve!"

"You shan't die! You shan't starve! I'll help you!" broke in the wife, throwing her arms about her husband and drawing his head down on her breast.

"Poor papa!" she whispered, stroking his hair with her knotted, freckled hands. "It'll be all right."

An hour later they sat together in the old horse car. His arm was in a sling, and a club-shaped bandage took the place of his right hand. It was redolent of iodine, and the people moved away from them; it made Nicholas himself a little sick. He was very white under his grizzled beard, but his lips were firm. She still sobbed, and her face was blotched and swollen from her tears. Now and then big Nicholas patted her shoulder. "There, there, wife," he repeated, automatically. "It don't hurt now."

The trees outside the cobbler's shop were shaking their yellow leaves on the pavement. Here and there among them fluttered a yellow moth. This was the meaning of the caterpillars. From the open door came the familiar tap, tap of the hammer, and even across the street one could smell the odor of leather.

But Nicholas Helm was not there, his work wedged between his knees and his thin needle stabbing unceasingly in and out. In his place a woman bent over the broad shoe soles. The sunshine flooded the little room, fusing her faded hair to bronze, and showing through her flying hands. A room was open behind the shop, and one could see big Nicholas standing by the stove.

The baby tucked under his maimed arm. He was stirring something in a kettle, and his face was anxious.

"I bet she's got them peas in slant-in'," he muttered to himself. "How you gettin' on, wife?" he called aloud.

"All right. Dinner ready?" she answered, cheerfully; but she thought, "I wonder if he's salted that stew as bad as he done yesterday!"—Munsey's.

WAS SHOCKED BY A LIVE WIRE.

Electricity Proves a Fatal Under Water as in the Air.

The truthfulness of the old saying that one never can tell where lightning is going to strike is proved by an accident which happened to a man while standing on the bottom of the Willamette, in a diver's suit of armor, a few days since. The City and Suburban Railway Company has a power-house near Luman & Poulson's mill, from which the electricity is conveyed by a submarine cable across the river to operate some of its lines on the West Side. A short time since the Union power-house, from which some of the company's lines were operated, was burned, and, as misfortune never comes singly, a day or two since the cable which crosses the river at the foot of Jefferson street failed in its duty.

J. F. Kelley, superintendent of the power plant on the East Side, took steps to ascertain what the trouble was and to have it put to rights. He sent Billy Martin, the company's diver, down to overhaul the cable, which was found to have sustained a fracture, and the copper wire in the center, which is the conductor, had in some way got in contact with the wire covering which protects the outside of the cable.

The power had been shut off from the cable at the power-house before the diver went down, and all concerned supposed he would have "dead wire" to handle.

They forgot about the "back water" current from the Third street trolley wire, which kept that part of the cable west of the break charged and very much "alive." In bending his head close down to the cable to examine the break, for the light was dim down there, the metallic fixtures on the diver's helmet touched the charged end of it, and he received a shock which nearly knocked him insensible. He signaled "up" as quick as he could, and when hauled to the surface expressed a strong desire to stay there.

He had been surprised as well as shocked, and he wanted to quit work there and then, as it was not in his contract to have live wires applied to his "headpiece." He was remonstrated with and assured that he must be mistaken; that it was impossible he could have been shocked by electricity because the power was shut off at the power house. He was finally persuaded that the shock was due to the imagination, or something of the sort, and his helmet being put on, down he went again. Before he could fairly see what he was about he was shocked again in the same manner, and came to the surface, if possible quicker and madder than before. Finally some one thought of shutting off the power from the Third street line, and the cable was soon raised and properly repaired.—Morning Oregonian.

Steel For Pens and Swords.

At the present time there is more steel used in the manufacture of pens than in all the sword and gun factories in the world.

Every man prices himself too high.

## SAVED FROM A TERRIBLE DEATH.

Slide of a Boy on the Edge of a Chasm on Mount Lassen.

Thursday Ira Crum, of Chico, had a most thrilling escape from death. A party of thirty men and women, who have been camping in the mountains, made the ascent of Mount Lassen. The trip was a most laborious one, the trail being exceedingly hard to follow. When they reached the top Ira Crum, one of the party, who was standing on the edge of the mountain, lost his hat, which blew but a short distance on the snow. Thinking he could secure it safely, Crum stepped out on the snow. No sooner had he fairly started when his feet slipped from under him and away he went down the mountain. He slid with lightning rapidity to the very edge of a deep precipice, and there he stuck in the snow. Had he gone six feet further he would have fallen 2,000 feet on to the rocks below and would certainly have been dashed to pieces.

The friends on top of the mountain could see him clinging to the snow for dear life. His two sisters, Alice and Vila Crum, were in the party and were terribly frightened. His friends at once began thinking of some way to save him. At first they thought of returning to camp for a rope long enough to reach down from the top of the mountain, but it was feared that Crum could not hold on in his perilous position for the length of time it would take to make such a long journey.

At last E. B. Collins, of Chico, and Dr. De Haven, of Red Bluff, conceived an idea. This was to take a couple of short sticks and by starting on a level with the clinging boy, dig a trail along the banks of the precipice to where he was. This was an exceedingly slow and dangerous undertaking, as one misstep would have hurled them to instant death. When the rescuers reached Crum they found him nearly unconscious from the cold and his hands and feet were nearly frozen. Ira was finally released from his perilous position, but Collins and the doctor almost had to carry him out, so badly was he used up by his rough experience.—San Francisco Chronicle.

Bad Teeth Not to Be Allowed.

The employees of the Continental Match Company, in Passaic, N. J., were solemnly warned to have their teeth plugged or lose their jobs. Yet there are still unplugged cavities in the teeth of the Continental's employees, and only the dentists are out of a job. The Continental employs about 300 hands, of whom 200 are girls. Mr. Gould is not a crank on teeth, but it was forcibly brought to his notice the other day that if a man, woman or child in the employment of a match company lost his or her teeth in the course of employment the employing company might be held liable. The widow of an employee of the Diamond Match Company lately recovered \$10,000 from the company in a suit having no other basis. This set the Continental people to thinking, and the result was that they called in a dentist to inspect the teeth of all their employees. The results were startling. It was found that of 200 young women, in ordinary health, and of rather more than ordinary good looks, as many as sixty had defective teeth. Some of the defects were not obvious, some were. But in three-tenths of the mouths examined by the dentist there were exposed nerves. Every doctor knows that to expose a nerve, not properly covered with enamel, to the fumes of phosphorus, means necrosis, which is death of the bone. The Continental Match Company is only "standing pat." If it stands by its edict, as the manager says it will, there will be some busy dentists in Passaic, or else the match works will close.

The Horrible "Jiggers" of Africa.

The village of Mayilo is surrounded by a bonia of stakes, clayed four feet up; the three gates are firmly closed at night. The natives do not venture outside at night for any purpose, and this gives the village a very pretty aspect. The place is horribly infested with the burrowing flea, "the jigger," the pest of men, women and children, who are a mass of horrid sores. Through lack of washing, and removing the jigger when he first enters, big sores are found all over the feet. I felt very sorry for the children, who were all more or less lame, and many stumbling about on their heels, unable to put foot to ground, owing to swollen toes. The moaning of women at night, and the bellowing of youngsters, were most distressing to hear. I tried to impress on them that constant washing and attention to their feet and occasional flooding of the low, clayey ground in hut and street would cure the evil; but it was too much like hard work to be adopted. The flooding could be done without the slightest injury to property, as the streets are quite level, and the clay floorings of grass brick are raised about a foot above the ground; but no precautions are taken, and even the babies are permitted to squat on the bare ground as though the jigger did not exist.—Century.

Wit of the Joyous Lunatic.

The teeth of the old gentleman who was frequently late to breakfast came together upon some hard substance with a thrilling shock. The old gentleman who was frequently late to breakfast turned an injured glance upon the landlady. The joyous lunatic smiled cheerfully.

"Madam," said the old gentleman, "as a general thing I do not criticize the victuals you see fit to place before us, but in this case I am obliged to. I have, I am certain, found some foreign substance in the hash."

The face of the joyous lunatic lighted up.

"No substance," he remarked, "is foreign to hash."

Soared Too Much.

Dr. Eaton, president of Madison University forty years ago, was beloved by the students and his good opinion courted above all else. One commencement day, the student who had delivered the valedictory approached the doctor and timidly asked him what he thought of the effort. The doctor looked at him a moment and then said, slowly: "Edward, if you would pluck a few of the feathers from the wings of your imagination and stick them in the tail of your judgment, you would make better speeches."

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